BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2006FOR0112-001109
Sept. 13, 2006

Ministry of Forests and Range

BEETLE PLAN GUIDES FORESTS, COMMUNITIES INTO FUTURE

VICTORIA – British Columbia's updated mountain pine beetle action plan, backed by close to $500 million, hints at what the Interior could look like decades from now, with a more diversified forest industry, new adventure tourism businesses, and increased mining and oil and gas activity.

"This is the second update since our action plan was first released in 2001," said Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman. "We've made a lot of progress in the last five years and made a number of important investments. This plan builds on that work and will help us turn the beetle infestation from a challenge to an opportunity."

B.C.'s updated Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan outlines 59 key actions to be taken in the coming year, as well as 13 multi-year actions, aimed at helping B.C. achieve sustainability for forests, communities and the provincial economy.

The updated plan involves growing the value-added wood sector, developing non-timber forest product enterprises with First Nations, ensuring road networks meet timber transportation needs, and establishing a mountain pine beetle research information network.

The vision in the Action Plan is backed by close to $500 million in strategic investments by the Province. Forests for Tomorrow and the Northern Development Initiative Trust are two of the long-term programs set up to respond to the reforestation and economic development needs created by the infestation.

The $185-million Northern Development Initiative Trust, which includes a $30-million Pine Beetle Recovery Account, is in place to help communities diversify their local economies. The Northern Trust is investing in recreation, tourism, and proposals to develop other resource-based sectors such as mining, energy and agriculture.

With provincial support, community coalitions in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and the Omineca regions are building regional business plans that will help them diversify through the infestation. Funding from the Northern Trust will go to project proposals emerging from these locally developed strategies as they are evaluated and approved by the Northern Trust.

Forests for Tomorrow is a $161-million program aimed at future timber supplies and restoring ecosystems. The program is investing in seed and seedling production, site preparation, planting and fertilization, surveying, mapping, and research aimed at strengthening the resilience of B.C.'s forests to climate change and natural disturbances.

-more-

The Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan was introduced in 2001 and is updated regularly. Input comes from the Minister's Community Advisory Group, which includes members from communities, First Nations, the forest and range industries, logging contractors, academia, environmental groups, and the federal government.

"B.C.'s Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan provides vision and direction for working together to sustain affected forests and communities," said 100 Mile House Mayor Donna Barnett, a member of the Minister's Community Advisory Group. "We'll be living with the effects of the beetle for at least 30 years – but we need to start planning that future today."

The Province, the federal government, First Nations and communities are working closely together to effectively mitigate the impacts of the beetle infestation. Last year, the federal government transferred $100 million to the Province, and this spring committed another $200 million to help British Columbia mitigate the impacts of the beetle infestation. These funds are part of the $1 billion the federal government has promised over 10 years.

The participation of First Nations on the mountain pine beetle provincial emergency response team is improving the ability of the government and First Nations to work together in addressing mountain pine beetle issues.

For more information on the updated Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, or to download a copy, visit www.gov.bc.ca/pinebeetle.

-30-

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Jennifer McLarty
Public Affairs Officer
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-4592

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.